POEMS

THEODORE MAYNARD

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY
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Exhibit
Jean S. Hanson
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Reading again
Jan. 3, 1958
Jay But Tired
Jay was buried
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POEMS

POEMS

By

THEODORE MAYNARD

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

G. K. CHESTERTON

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TO

MY WIFE

We two have seen with our own eyes
God's multitudinous disguise;
Waylaid Him in His voyaging
Among the buttercups of Spring;
In valleys where the lilies shone
More glorious than Solomon
We met a poet passing by,
And learned his lyric—you and I!

But oh! did kindly Heaven not bless
Our lives with more than loveliness,
When, cast on every sapling-rod,
Was seen the motley of our God;
When having picked our way with craft
Up cliffs to hear Him when He laughed,
We felt, uplifted on the wind,
His folly blown into our mind?

What doubt can touch us? We have heard
The baby laughter of the Word!
We mingle with solemnity
A Catholic note of revelry
In hypostatic union.
From love's carved choir-stalls we con
The plain-song of the Breviary
Illumined by hilarity.
For as each cleansing sacrament
To our soul's comforting was sent
(Through water and oil and wheat and wine,
Bringing to human the divine),
So shall we find on lovers' lips
The splendour of apocalypse,

And through the body's five gates come
To all the good of Christendom.

We have no fear that we shall lose
This joyous Gospel of good news,
For our symbolic love has stood
By virtue of its fortitude—
Knowing a bitter Lenten fast,
Satan discomforted at last,
A bowed back scalding with great scars,
Gethsemane of tears and stars,
A journey of the cross, and ah,
Its part and lot in Golgotha!

We know—let the marvellous thing be said!—
Love's resurrection from the dead . . .
For as Magdalen came with cinnamon
And aloes to smear Love's limbs upon,
But met alone on the Easter grass
Life's Lord, though she wist not Who He was—
So we, till He spoke as He spoke to her,
Mistook Him for the gardener.

April 14th, 1918.

NOTE

This edition of Theodore Maynard's poems represents the author's own selection of such of his published verse as he wishes included in a permanent collection. With few omissions, it represents the contents of the three volumes issued in Great Britain under the titles, "*Laughs and Whifts of Song*," 1915; "*Drums of Defeat*," 1917; "*Folly*," 1918, none of which has hitherto been published in this country.

ON THEODORE MAYNARD'S POEMS

In the case of any poet who has cuaght and held our recollection, there is generally a particular piece of work which remains in our mind, not as the crown, but as the key. And ever since I saw in *The New Witness* some lines called "A Song of Colours," by Theodore Maynard, they have remained to me as a sort of simplification, or permanent element, of the rest of the poet's writings; and I have felt him especially as a poet of colour. They are not by any means the best of his lines. They are direct, as is appropriate to a ballad; and they have none of the fine whimsicality or the frank humour to be found elsewhere in his work. Among these others the choice is hard: but I should say that the finest poetry as such is to be found in the images, and even in the very title, of "The World's Miser": and even more in the poem called "Apocalypse." In this latter the poet imagines a new world which shall be supernatural in the strongest sense of the word; that of being more vivid and positive than the natural; and not (as it is so often imagined) more tenuous and void.

> "Or what empurpled blooms to oust the rose
> Or what strange grass to glow like angels' hair!"

The last line has the touch of the true mystic, which changes a thing and yet leaves it familiar. True artistic pugnacity, a thing that generally goes with true artistic pleasure, is well-expressed in the shrewd lines of the poem printed as a sequel to another poem called "To a Good Atheist." The sequel is called "To

a Bad Atheist," with the charming explanation: "Who wrote what he called a trinity of meek retorts to the preceding poem, which were not meek, but full of pride and abominable heresy." He describes the bad atheist's mind as containing nothing but sawdust, sun and sand; which is accurate and exhaustive. And in so far as poetry appeals to particular temperaments, I myself find enjoyment expecially in the part of the collection properly to be called "Laughs"; in the ballads of feasting and fellowship; and especially in that sublime absolution gravely offered to the Duke of Norfolk.

But the sentiment of colour still ran like a thread through the whole texture; and I think there is hardly a poem that does not repeat it. And this is important; because the whole of Mr. Maynard's inspiration is part of what is the main business of our time: the resurrection of the Middle Ages. The modern movement, with its Guild Socialism and its military reaction against the fatalism of the Barbarian, is as certainly drawing its life from the lost centuries of Catholic Europe, as the movement more commonly called the Renaissance drew its life from the lost languages and sculptures of antiquity. And, by a quaint inconsistency, Hellenists and Neo-Pagans of the school of Mr. Lowes Dickinson will call us antiquated for gathering the flowers which still grow on the graves of our mediæval ancestors, while they themselves will industriously search for the scattered ashes from the more distant pyres of the Pagans.

And the visible clue to the Middle Ages is colour. The mediæval man could paint before he could draw. In the almost startling inspiration which we call stained glass, he discovered something that is almost more coloured than colour; something that bears the same relation to mere colour that golden flame does to golden sand. He did not, like other artists, try in his pictures to paint the sun; he made the sun paint his pictures. He mixed the aboriginal light with the paints upon his palette. And it is this translucent actuality of colour which I feel in the phraseology of this writer, in a way it is not easy to analyse. We can only say that when he says—

> "Among the yellow primroses
> He holds His summer palaces"

we have an impression, which it is the object of all poetry to produce. It can only be described by saying that a primrose by the river's brim a *yellow* primrose is to him, and it could not possibly be anything more. And this almost torrid directness and distinctness of tint is again connected with another quality of the poet and his poetic tradition: what many would call asceticism alternating with what many would call buffoonery. The colour conventions of the Middle Ages were copied very beautifully by the school of Rossetti and Swinburne. But they lost the exuberance of the Gothic and became a pattern rather than a plan; chiefly because they were not seriously inspired by any of the enthusiasms of the Middle Ages. Its

decorative repetitions sometimes became quite dreary and artificial; as in Swinburne's unfortunate couplet about the lilies and languors of virtue and the raptures and roses of vice. A little healthy gardening would have taught Swinburne that it takes quite as much virtue to grow a rose as to grow a lily. It might also have taught him that virtue is never languid, whatever else it may be: and that even lilies are not really languid so long as they are alive. If such decadents want an image of what it really is that holds up the heads of lilies or any other growing things, I can refer them to a couplet in this little volume, which is more beautiful and more original and means a great deal more—

> "What wilful trees of any spring
> Than your young body are more fair?"

These lines contain a principle of life and mark the end of a pagan sterility. They contain the secret, not of gathering rosebuds while we may, but of growing them when we choose.

G. K. CHESTERTON.

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POEMS

LAUGHS AND WHIFTS OF SONG

A SONG OF COLOURS

GOLD for the crown of Mary,
Blue for the sea and sky,
Green for the woods and meadows
Where small white daisies lie,
And red for the colour of Christ's blood
When He came to the cross to die.

These things the high God gave us
And left in the world He made—
Gold for the hilt's enrichment,
And blue for the sword's good blade,
And red for the roses a youth may set
On the white brows of a maid.

Green for the cool, sweet gardens
Which stretch about the house,
And the delicate new frondage
The winds of Spring arouse,
And red for the wine which a man may drink
With his fellows in carouse.

Blue and green for the comfort
Of tired hearts and eyes,

And red for that sudden hour which comes
With danger and great emprise,
And white for the honour of God's throne
When the dead shall all arise.

Gold for the cope and chalice,
For kingly pomp and pride,
And red for the feathers men wear in their caps
When they win a war or a bride,
And red for the robe which they dressed God in
On the bitter day He died.

CECIDIT, CECIDIT BABYLON MAGNA!

THE aimless business of your feet,
Your swinging wheels and piston rods,
The smoke of every sullen street
Have passed away with all your Gods.

For in a meadow far from these
A hodman treads across the loam,
Bearing his solid sanctities
To that strange altar called his home.

I watch the tall, sagacious trees
Turn as the monks do, every one;
The saplings, ardent novices,
Turning with them towards the sun,

That Monstrance held in God's strong hands,
Burnished in amber and in red;
God, His Own priest, in blessing stands;
The earth, adoring, bows her head.

The idols of your market place,
Your high debates, where are they now?
Your lawyers' clamour fades apace—
A bird is singing on the bough!

CECIDIT, CECIDIT BABYLON MAGNA!

Three fragile, sacramental things
  Endure, though all your pomps shall pass—
A butterfly's immortal wings,
  A daisy and a blade of grass.

APOCALYPSE

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away."—Apoc. xxi, 1.

SHALL summer woods where we have laughed
our fill;
Shall all your grass so good to walk upon;
Each field which we have loved, each little hill
Be burnt like paper—as hath said Saint John?

Then not alone they die! For God hath told
How all His plains of mingled fire and glass,
His walls of hyacinth, His streets of gold,
His aureoles of jewelled light shall pass,

That He may make us nobler things than these,
And in her royal robes of blazing red
Adorn His bride. Yea, with what mysteries
And might and mirth shall she be diamonded!

And what new secrets shall our God disclose;
Or set what suns of burnished brass to flare;
Or what empurpled blooms to oust the rose;
Or what strange grass to glow like angels' hair!

What pinnacles of silver tracery,
  What dizzy rampired towers shall God devise
Of topaz, beryl and chalcedony
  To make Heaven pleasant to His children's
    eyes!

And in what cataclysms of flame and foam
  Shall the first Heaven sink—as red as sin—
When God hath cast aside His ancient home
  As far too mean to house His children in!

GHOSTS

SOME dismal nights there are when spirits walk
Who lived and died unhappy in their time,
To waste the air with vows and whispered talk
Of tarnished love or hate or secret crime—
But now the moon moves splendid through the sky;
The night is brilliant like a silver shield;
And in their cavalcades come riding by
The mighty dead of many a tented field.
On this one night at least of all the year
The lists are set again, the lines are drawn;
Again resounds the clang of horse and spear;
The sweet applause of ladies, till the dawn
Makes glad the souls of vizored knights—then they,
Hearing that seneschal, the cock, all troop away.

PROCESSIONAL

SEE how the plated gates unfold,
How swing the creaking doors of brass!
With drums and gleaming arms, behold
Christ's regal cohorts pass!

Shall Christ not have His chosen men,
Nor lead His crested knights so tall,
Superb upon their horses, when
The world's last cities fall?

Ah, no! These few, the maimed, the dumb,
The saints of every lazar's den,
The earth's off-scourings—they come
From desert and from fen

To break the terror of the night,
Black dreams and dreadful mysteries,
And proud, lost empires in their might,
And chains and tyrannies.

There ride no gold-encinctured kings
Against the potentates of earth;
God chooses all the weakest things,
And gives Himself in birth

With beaten slaves to draw His breath,
  And sleeps with foxes on the moor,
With malefactors shares His death,
  Tattered and worn and poor.

See how the plated gates unfold,
  How swing the creaking doors of brass!
Victorious in defeat—behold,
  Christ and His cohorts pass!

A SONG OF LAUGHTER

THE stars with their laughter are shaken;
The long waves laugh at sea;
And the little Imp of Laughter
Laughs in the soul of me.

I know the guffaw of a tempest,
The mirth of a blossom and bud—
But I laugh when I think of Cuchulain* who laughed
At the crows with their bills in his blood.

The mother laughs low at her baby,
The bridegroom with joy in his bride—
And I think that Christ laughed when they took Him with staves
On the night before He died.

*Pronounced Cuhúlain.

BALLADE IN PRAISE OF ARUNDEL

(Made after a walk through Surrey and Sussex.)

I'VE trudged along the Pilgrims' Way,
And from St. Martha's Hill looked down
O'er Surrey woods and fields which lay
Green in the sunlight. On the crown
Of Hindhead and the Punchbowl's brink
Of no good thing I've been bereaven:
But Arundel's the place for drink—
The pubs keep open till eleven.

White chalk-cliffs and the stubborn clay
Are thrown about, and many a town
Breaks on the sight like breaking day;
But after all, who but a clown
Could Arundel with Midhurst link,
Where men go dry from two till seven?
In *Arundel* (no truth I'll shrink)
The pubs keep open till eleven.

A great cool church where men can pray
Secure from misbelieving frown;
And in the Square, I beg to say,
The beer is strong and rich and brown.

BALLADE IN PRAISE OF ARUNDEL

Some poor, misguided people think
  Petworth's the spot that's nearest Heaven:
In *Arundel* the ale-pots clink—
  The pubs keep open till eleven.

L'Envoi

Duke, at the dreadful Judgment Day
  Your soul will surely be well shriven,
For then all angel trumps shall bray,
  He kept pubs open till eleven!

THE TRAMP

MY brothers stay in cities
To gather shame and gold,
But I am for the highway
And the wind upon the wold.

They take the train each morning
To a dull, bricked-up place;
I trudge the living country
With the sunlight on my face.

I know no home or shelter,
No bed but good green grass,
Nor any friends but hedgerows
To greet me as I pass.

But though the road still calls me
To places wild and steep,
I find the going heavy;
My eyes are full of sleep.

The fields lie all about me;
The trees are gay with sap—
As I go weary, weary
To my great mother's lap,

To rest me with my mother,
The kindly earth so brown.
And Lord! But well contented
I'll lay my carcase down.

THE WORLD'S MISER

I

A MISER with an eager face
Sees that each roseleaf is in place.

He keeps beneath strong bolts and bars
The piercing beauty of the stars.

The colours of the dying day
He hoards as treasure—well He may!—

And saves with care (lest they be lost)
The dainty diagrams of frost.

He counts the hairs of every head,
And grieves to see a sparrow dead.

II

Among the yellow primroses
He holds His summer palaces,

And sets the grass about them all
To guard them as His spearmen small.

He fixes on each wayside stone
A mark to shew it as His Own,

And knows when raindrops fall through air
Whether each single one be there,

That gathered into ponds and brooks
They may become His picture-books,

To shew in every spot and place
The living glory of His face.

EASTER

AMONG the gay, exultant trees,
Over the green and growing grass,
Clothed in immortal mysteries,
I see His living body pass.

The catkins fling abroad His name,
While birds from every bush and spray
Strain feathered necks, and tipped with flame
The hills all stand to greet His day.

Each violet and bluebell curled
Wakes with the dead Christ's waking eye,
And like burst gravestones clouds are hurled
Across the wide and waiting sky.

And drenched, for very height of mirth,
With clean white tears of April rain,
Like Mary Magdalene the earth
Finds April's risen Lord again.

THE GLORY OF THE ORIFLAMME

THE glory of the Oriflamme,
Or strange, red flowers of the South
Hold no such splendours as lie hid
In your sweet mouth!

The secret honey of the cliff,
The lure and laughter of the sea
Are not the dear delight that is
Your face to me!

What wilful trees of any spring
Than your young body are more fair?
What glamour of forgotten gold
Lurks in your hair?

The glory of the Oriflamme,
Or strange, red flowers of the South
Hold no such splendours as lie hid
In your sweet mouth!

TO A GOOD ATHEIST

THAT you can keep your crested courage high,
And hopeless hope without a cause, and wage
Christ's warfare, lacking all the panoply
Of Faith which shall endure the end of age,

You must be made of finely tempered stuff,
And have a kinship with that Spanish saint,
Who wrote of his soul's night—it was enough
That he should drag his footsteps tired and faint

Along his God-appointed pathway. You
Have stood against our day of bitter scorn,
When loudly its triumphant trumpets blew
Contempt of all God's poor. Had you been born

But in the time of Jeanne or Catharine,
Whose charity was as a sword of flame,
With those who drank up martyrdom like wine
Had stood your aureoled and ringing name.

Yet, when that secret day of God shall break
With strange and splendid justice through the skies,
When last are first, then star-ward you shall take
The praise and sorrow of your starry eyes.

TO A BAD ATHEIST

who wrote what he called a trinity of meek retorts to the preceding poem, which were not meek, but full of pride and abominable heresy.

YOU do not love the shadows on the wall,
Or mists that flee before a blowing wind,
Or Gothic forests, or light aspen leaves,
Or skies that melt into a dreamy sea.
In the hot, glaring noontide of your mind
(I have your word for it) there is no room
For anything save sawdust, sun and sand.

No monkish flourishes will do for you;
Your life must be set down in black and white.
The quiet half-light of the abbey close,
The cunning carvings of a chantry tomb,
The leaden windows pricked with golden saints—
All these are nothing to your ragtime soul!

Yet, since you are a solemn little chap,
In spite of all your blasphemy and booze,
That dreadful sword of satire which you shake
Hurts no hide but your own,—you cannot use
A weapon which is bigger than yourself.

Yet some there were who rode all clad in mail,—
With crosses blazoned on their mighty shields,
Roland who blew his horn against the Moor,
Richard who charged for Christ at Ascalon,
Louis a pilgrim with his chivalry,
And Blessed Jeanne who saved the crown of
France—
Pah! you may keep your whining Superman!

PALM SUNDAY

THE grey hairs of Caiaphas
Shall know the truth to-day,
For kingly, riding on an ass,
The Truth has come his way.

(*A thornbush grows upon the hill,*
And Golgotha is empty still!)

Caiaphas waxes eloquent
On tittle and on jot,
But when they cry "Hosanna!"
Caiaphas answers not.

(*A thornbush grows upon the hill,*
And Golgotha is empty still!)

In the temple of Caiaphas
Stand two gold seraphim—
They do not worship Christ nor shout
As the grey stones shout for Him.

(*A thornbush grows upon the hill,*
And Golgotha is empty still!)

The vestments of Caiaphas
With gold and silver shone—
They would get soiled if he cast them down
For the ass to walk upon.

(*A thornbush grows upon the hill,*
And Golgotha is empty still!)

The religion of Caiaphas
Is very spick and span,
It does not love the ill-bred mob,
The homespun Son of Man!

(*A thornbush grows upon the hill,*
And Golgotha is empty still!)

The dark soul of Caiaphas
Is full of sin and pride;
It does not know the splendour
Or the triumph of that ride!

(*A thornbush grows upon the hill,*
And Golgotha is empty still!)

WHEN I RIDE INTO THE TOWN

WHEN I go riding into the town,
When I ride into the town,
I fill my skin at the nearest inn
When I ride into the town.
Oh, what is there then to trouble about?
There are no such things as despair and doubt—
For when ale goes in the truth comes out,
When I ride into the town!

When I go riding out of the town,
When I ride out of the town,
I have my men behind me then
When I ride out of the town;
Halberd, battle-axe, culverin, bow,
Four hundred strong as out we go,
Four hundred yeomen to meet the foe,
When I ride out of the town!

When I ride into the Town of Death—
That strange and unknown town!—
It will not be all *cap-à-pie,*
But with sword and lance laid down.

Then may our Lady beside me stand;
Saint Michael guard at my good right hand—
God rest my soul and the souls of my band,
When we ride into the Town!

REQUIEM

WHEN my last song is sung and I am dead
And laid away beneath the kindly clay,
Set a square stone above my dreamless head,
And sign me with the cross and signing say:
"Here lieth one who loved the steadfast things
Of his own land, its gladness and its grace,
The stubbled fields, the linnets' gleaming wings,
The long, low gables of his native place,
Its gravelled paths, and the strong wind that rends
The boughs about the house, the hearth's red glow,
The surly, slow good-fellowship of friends,
The humour of the men he used to know,
And all their swinging choruses and mirth"—
Then turn aside and leave my dust in earth.

AVE ATQUE VALE!

MY friends, I may no longer ride with you
To bear a sword in your brave company,
Or follow our poor tattered flag which knew
No shame or slur—or any victory.

But this at least, with courage and with mirth
We starveling poets and enthusiasts
Have shirked no battle for the stricken earth
Against its tyrants' spears and arbalests.

And though I go to guard another sign,
These things, please God, shall stand and never slip—
(O friends of mine, O splendid friends of mine!)
Honour and Freedom and Goodfellowship,
On which and on your ragged chivalry
I always think with proud humility.

ALADDIN

THOUGH worlds all melt away in mist,
The Heavens' slender filament,
The orange and the amethyst,
Are left me—and I am content!

I stand serene amid the shocks,
Upheavals, cataclysmic dust,
The binding fires, the falling rocks,
The withering of life and lust.

This little burnished lamp I hold
Has shattered the eternities;
The glamour of all unknown gold,
The ancient puissance of the seas,

The sunlight and the love of God
Are cast in chains beneath my feet—
For at my first behest this sod
Becomes a cosmos, new, complete,

Instinct with unimagined power,
In colour radiant pole to pole,
The sudden glory of an hour,
The epic moment of my soul!

ADAM

I SAW a red sky boding woe,
The gleam of an eternal sword,
And heard the voice that bid me go
From the green garden of the Lord.

I knew the prick of Destiny,
The scorn of the relentless stars;
The very grass looked down on me—
The first of all the Avatars!

Each flower seemed to see my shame;
Each bird as though insulted flew
Before my hateful face—my name
Was blown about the whole world through!

Even my house with its red roof,
Dear as it is, looks strange and odd;
My garden beds are more aloof
From me than is my angry God!

THE ENGLISH SPRING

I LOVE each inch of English earth;
I love each stone upon the way—
Whether in Winter's sullen dearth,
When the soil is trodden into clay—
In Autumn ripeness, or the mirth
Of a Summer's day.

Something peculiar to our land
Is hid in even the greyest sky,
When stiff and stark the tall trees stand
And the wind is high.

But this one season of our year
Is so peculiarly an English thing,
When the woolly catkins first appear,
And yellow burgeoning
Upon the little coppice here—
This native Spring

Which comes to us so suddenly,
Blown over the hills from the fruitful
South;
Full of the laughter of the laughing sea
She comes with singing mouth.

THE ENGLISH SPRING

The cool, sweet Wiltshire meadows lie
With buttercups from end to end;
In secret woods are small blooms, shy
Bluebells the good gods send.
There is no cloud that wanders by
But is my friend.

And now the gorse is gold again;
The violet hides beneath the leaves;
And quickened by thin April rain
The debonair young sapling weaves
His coat of lightest green; again
Birds chirp at the eaves.

Each hidden brook and waterfall,
Each tiny daisy in the sun
Calls to my heart—the hedgerows all
So full of twigs, they call, each one;
And with insistent voices call
The roads where the wild flowers run.

O set with grass and the English hedge
Are the long, white roads which wind
and wind—
Roads which reach to the world's edge,
Where the world is left behind.

AT THE CRIB

AGAIN the royalties are shed,
Disdiademed the kingly head,
He lies again—ah, very small!—
Among the cattle in the stall,
Or in His slender mother's arms
Is snuggled up from baby harms.

The Tower of Ivory leans down
From Paradise's topmost crown;
The House of Gold on earth takes root;
From Jesse comes a saving shoot,
For Mary gives (O manifold
Her courtesies!) that we may hold
Our little Lord's poor fragile hands
And feet, the guerdon of all lands.

No fool need fail to enter in
The guarded Heaven we strive to win,
Or miss upon a casual street
The fiery impress of His feet,
But touch with every stone and sod
The extended fingers of our God,

And see in twigs of the stiff hedgerows,
Or in the woods where quiet grows
Among the naked Winter trees,
A thousand times these mysteries:
The branching arms with Christly fruit,
The thorns which bruise His head and foot.

No more with silver shrilly blown
He treads a conqueror, but, flown
With swift and silent whitening wings,
He comes enwrapped in baby things.
Our God adventures everywhere
Beneath the cool and Christmas air,
And setteth still His candid star
Where Mary and her baby are!

THE MYSTIC

WHEN all my long and weary work is done
(Toiling both soon and late, by candle-light,
Sewing and sewing while my eyes can see)
I lay my glasses by and watch the walls—
The plaster off in patches, stained with smoke—
Melt as a hoary mist and flee away.
Then through the splendour of the evening skies,
Along its star-lit paths, past pearl-white clouds
I hasten till I reach the region where
God's holy city like a virgin keeps
Its spotless tryst, forever night and day.
I do not linger here, but take my way
To Him who sits among the Seraphim;
And He who knows I am a poor old wife,
With naught of wit or wealth that I can bring,
And that my hands are hardened by my toil—
Sees that 'tis I that need Him most of all.
Yea, God will have the music hushed (for I
Am growing somewhat deaf) and we will talk
Of many things, as friend may talk with friend.

Ah, I have looked, and in the dear Lord's face
(More lined with care than any earthly man's)

Seen that He suffers too, and understands
How hard and late I work to keep the wolf
Outside my door, and bring my children up
To serve Him always, and to keep them clean
In body, heart and mind. . . .

At the sun's call,
Working with all my strength from early dawn,
Through the long day, and then by candle-light
Sewing on buttons while my eyes can see,
I know the glory of God's gracious face,
And at His touch my weary hands grow strong,
Hearing His voice my heart is glad and gay.

TO ANY SAINT

BEFORE the choirs of angels burst to song,
In night and loneliness your way you trod—
O valiant heart, O weary feet and strong,
There are no easy by-paths unto God.

Darkness there was, thick darkness all around;
Nor spoken word, nor hand to touch you knew,
But One who walked the self-same stony ground
And shared your dereliction there with you.

O valiant heart! O fixed, undaunted will!
While all the heavens hung like brass above,
You faltered not, but steadfast journeyed still
Upon the road of sainthood to your Love.

And was not it reward exceeding great
To kiss at last with passionate lips His side,
His hands, His feet? O pomp! O regal state!
O crown of life He gives unto His bride!

Lovers there are with roses chapleted,
But more than theirs is your Lord's loveliness;
Your Love is crowned with thorns upon His head,
And pain and sorrow woven is His dress.

SUNSET ON THE DESERT

AS some priest turns, his ritual all done,
And stretching hands above the kneeling crowd,
Who rapt and silent, wait with heads all bowed
For the last holy words of benison—
"Now God be with thee, ever Three in One"—
So turns the sun, though all reluctantly.
One thrilling moment comes to shrub and tree;
Expectant stillness falls; then dark and dun

The silhouettes of sphinx and pyramid
Gaze at the last deep amber after-glow;
The little stars peep down between the palms;
And all the ghosts that garish daylight hid
Are quickened—Isis with the breasts of snow
And Antony with Egypt in his arms.

FOLLY

FOLLY

SHALL I not wear my motley
And flaunt my bladder of green
Before the earls and the bishops
And the laughing king and queen;
Though hunger is in my belly
And jests my lips between?

Men listen a moment idly
To the foolishness I sing—
But my words are sharp and bitter
In savour and in sting,
And harder than mail in battle
Where the heavy maces swing.

For full of the sap of folly
Grow the branches of the Creed,
The fine adventurous folly
God gave us in our need,
When He yielded up to scornful death
The human brows that bleed.

They nailed the son of Mary
On a gibbet straight and tall;

But the eagles of the Roman
  Were struck in Cæsar's hall,
And the veil of the Holy of Holies
  Was rent in the temple wall.

Wiser than sage or prophet,
  Or the pedant of the school,
Than lord or abbot or priest or prince
  Who over the nations rule,
Are the cap and bells and the motley
  And the laughter of the fool!

February 12th, 1918.

THE SHIPS

THE bending sails shall whiten on the sea,
Guided by hands and eyes made glad for home,
With graven gems and cedar and ebony
From Babylon and Rome.

For here a lover cometh as to his bride,
And there a merchant to his utmost price—
Oh, hearts will leap to see the good ships ride
Safely to Paradise!

And this that cuts the waves with brazen prow
Hath heard the blizzard groaning through her spars;
Battered with honour swings she nobly now
Back from her bitter wars.

And that doth bring her silver work and spice,
Peacocks and apes from Tarshish, and from Tyre
Great cloaks of velvet stiff with gold device,
Coloured with sunset fire. . . .

And one, serenely through the golden gate,
  Shall sail and anchor by the ultimate shore,
Who, plundered of her gold by pirate Fate,
  Still keeps her richer store

Unrifled when her perilous journey ends
  And the strong cable holds her safe again:
Laughter and memories and the songs of friends
  And the sword edge of pain.

June 1917.

LAUGHTER

OH, not a poet lives but knows
The laughing beauty of the rose,
The heyday humour of the noon,
The solemn smiling of the moon,—
When night, as happy as a lover,
Doth kiss and kiss the earth, and cover
His face with all her tender hair.

Sweet bride and bridegroom everywhere,
And mothers, who so softly sing
Upon their babies' slumbering,
Know joy upon their lips, and laughter
At Joy's heels that comes tumbling after.

But who shall shake his sides to hear
That sacred laughter, fraught with fear,
That laughter strange and mystical—
The hero laughing in his fall;
Whene'er a man goes out alone,
Is thrown and is not overthrown?

The fates shall never bow the head
That irony hath comforted,
Nor thrust him down with shameful scars
Who towers above the reeling stars.

Thus God, Who shaketh roof and rafter
Of highest heaven with holy laughter;
Who made fantastic, foolish trees
Shadow the floors of tropic seas,
Where finny gargoyles, goggle-eyed,
Grin monstrously beneath the tide;
Who made for some titanic joke
Out of the acorn grow the oak;
From buried seed and riven rocks,
Brings death and life—a paradox!
Who breaks great Kingdoms, and their Kings,
Upon the knees of helpless things. . . .
So flesh the Word was made Who gave
His body to a human grave,
While devils gnashed their teeth at loss
To see Him triumph on the cross. . . .

Thus God, Who shaketh roof and rafter
Of highest heaven with holy laughter!

October 14th, 1917.

VOCATION

THOUGH God has put me in the world to praise
Each beetle's burnished wing, each blade of grass,
To track the manifold and marvellous ways
Whereon His bright creative footsteps pass;

To glory in the poplars' summer green,
To guard the sunset's glittering hoard of gold,
To gladden when the fallen leaves careen
On fairy keels upon the windy wold.

For this, for this, my eager mornings broke,
For this came sunshine and the lonely rain,
For this the stiff and sleepy woods awoke
And every hawthorn hedge along the lane.

For this God gave me all my joy of verse
That I might shout beneath exultant skies,
And meet, as one delivered from a curse,
The pardon and the pity in your eyes.

BLINDNESS

OPEN the casement! From my room,
Perched high upon this dizzy spire,
My blinded eyes behold the bloom
Of gardens in their golden fire.

Oh deep, mysterious recompense—
Time static to my ardent gaze!
No longer mortal veils of sense
Conceal the blissful ray of rays!

Fantastic forests toss their heads
For my immortal youth; on grass
Brighter than jewels do the reds
Of riotous summer roses pass.

I traffic in abysmal seas,
And dive for pearls and coloured shells,
Where, over seaweeds tall as trees,
The waters boom like tenor bells;

Where bearded goblin-fish and sharks,
With fins as large as eagles' wings,
Throw phosphorescent trails of sparks
Which glitter on drowned Spaniards' rings.

BLINDNESS

From star to star I pilgrimage,
  Undaunted in ethereal space;
And laugh because the sun in rage
  Shoots harmless arrows at my face.

For even if the skies should flare
  In God's last catastrophic blaze,
My happy, blinded eyes would stare
  Only upon the ray of rays.

January 20th, 1918.

DRINKING SONG

WHEN Horace wrote his noble verse,
His brilliant, glowing line,
He must have gone to bed the worse
For good Falernian wine.
No poet yet could praise the rose
In verse that so serenely flows
Unless he dipped his Roman nose
In good Falernian wine.

Shakespeare and Jonson too
Drank deep of barley brew—
Drank deep of barley brew, my boys,
Drank deep of barley brew!

When Alexander led his men
Against the Persian King,
He broached a hundred hogsheads, then
They drank like anything.
They drank by day, they drank by night,
And when they marshalled for the fight
Each put a score of foes to flight—
They drank like anything!

DRINKING SONG

No warrior worth his salt
But quaffs the mighty malt—
But quaffs the mighty malt, my boys,
But quaffs the mighty malt!

When Patrick into Ireland went
The works of God to do,
It was his excellent intent
To teach men how to brew.
The holy saint had in his train
A man of splendid heart and brain—
A brewer was this worthy swain—
To teach men how to brew.

The snakes he drove away
Were teetotallers they say—
Teetotallers they say, my boys,
Teetotallers they say!

September 30th, 1917.

THREE TRIOLETS

I

OF AN IMPROBABLE STORY

I HEARD a story from an oak
As I was walking in the wood—
I, of the stupid human-folk,
I heard a story from an oak.
Though larches into laughter broke
I hardly think I understood.
I heard a story from an oak
As I was walking in the wood.

II

OF DEPLORABLE SENTIMENTS

I wouldn't sell my noble thirst
For half-a-dozen bags of gold;
I'd like to drink until I burst.
I wouldn't sell my noble thirst
For lucre filthy and accurst—
Such treasures *can't* be bought and sold!
I wouldn't sell my noble thirst
For half-a-dozen bags of gold.

III

OF LOVE AND LAUGHTER

You scattered joy about my way
  And filled my lips with love and laughter
In white and yellow fields of May
You scattered joy about my way.
Though Winter come with skies of grey
  And grisly death come stalking after,
You scattered joy about my way
  And filled my lips with love and laughter

IN Italie a mony yeer ago
There lived a little childë Catharine,
With yongë, merrie hertë clere as snow.
From hir first youthful hour she did entwyne
Roses both whyt and reed—Godis columbine
She was. And for hir holy gaiety
Was by hir neighbours clept Euphrosyne.

Ech stepp she took upon hir fadirs staires,
Kneeling she did an Ave Mary say;
With ful devocioun she seid hir prayers
Ere that she wentë forth ech day to play;
Our Blessid Queen was in hir thought alway—
Our Modir Mary whose humility
Hath raiséd hir to hevinës magesté.

When only sevin was this childës age
She vowed hirself to sweet virginity,
Forsweering eny erthly marriáge,
That she the clenë bride of Crist schuld be,
Who on the heavy cross ful cruelly
The Jewës nailéd, hevin to open wide—
Crist for hir husëbond, she Cristës bride.

Swich was the litle innocentes intent,
Hirself unspotted from the world to kepe,
Al hidden in hir fadirs hous she went.
Whether in waking or in purë sleep
She builded hir a closë cellë deep—
Where Lordë Cristë colde walk with hir,
And hold alway His sweetë convers there.

So ful she was of gentil charity,
She diddë tend upon the sick ech day;
To beggars in their grete necessity
She gave hir cloke and petticoat away;
To no poor wightë did she sayë nay—
And when reprovéd merrily she spoke,
"God loveth charity more than my cloke."

An oldë widow lay al striken sore
With leprosé, that dreed and foul disease;
And to hir (filléd to the hertë core
With love of God) that she schuld bring hir ease
Did Catharine come, nor did hit hir displese
That she schuld wash the woundës tenderly,
And bind hem up for Goddës charity.

And though the pacient waxéd querulous,
The blessid seintë wearied neer a whit,
For hir upbrading tong so slanderous,
Nor even when upon hir handës lit
The leprosé corrupt and foul—for hit
Is nothing to the shamë Goddë bore
When nailes and speares His smoothë flesch
y-tore.

But now behold a woundrous miracle!
For al that Seintë Catharine colde do,
Hir pacient died and was y-carried wel
Unto hir gravë by stout men and true.
When they upon hir corse the cloddës threw,
Then new as eny childës gan to shine
The shrivvelled handes of holy Catharine!

There livéd there a youth clept Nicholas,
Who made in that citee seditioun,
Causing a gretë riot in that place,
So that the magistratës of the toun
Hent him and cast him in a strong prisoun;
And thilkë wightë they anon did try,
And for his sin condemnéd him to die.

And Catharine y-waxéd piteous
To see him brought unto this sorry case,
And went to him unto the prisoun hous
To move his soul to Jhesu Cristës grace.
So yong he was and fresh and faire of face,
Hir hertë movéd was as to a son,
And he by hir sweet, gracious wordes was won.

That for his deth he made a good accord,
And was y-shriven wel of his assoyl,
And with a humble soul received our Lord
From the prestes hands. His hertë that did boil
But little whyles ago—was freed from toil,
And fixéd on our Lordës precious blood,
Which for our sak He spilléd on the rood.

And when he came to executioun,
No feer had he nor eny bitter care,
But walked among the guardës thurgh the toun
In joy so hye as if he trod on air.
Seint Catharine she was y-waiting there
To cheer his soul against the dreedful end,
When unto God his soul at last most wend.

And there thilke holy virgin welcomed him;
"Come, Nicholas," she said, "my sonnë deere.
The boul of glorious life is at the brim—
Come, Nicholas—your nuptials are neer;
The bridegroom calleth, be you of good cheer."
And whyl they madë redy, on hir brest
She kept the hed of Nicholas at rest.

And when that al in ordre had been set,
She stretchéd out his nekkë tenderly,
"This day your soulës bridegroom shal be met.
Hark! how He calleth, sweet and winsomely."
And Nicholas spak to hir ful of glee—
"Jhesu" and "Catharine" the wordes he seid;
Then fel the ax and severed off his hed.

And even as his bloody hed did fall,
She caught hit in her lap and handës faire,
Nor reckéd that the blood was over al
Hir robës, but she kissed hit sitting there,
And smoothéd doun the rough and ragged hair.
God wot that gretë peace was in hir herte
That Nicholas in hevin had found his part.

O holy Catharine, pray for us then,
Be to our soules a modir and a frend;
We are poor wandering and sinful men,
And al unstable through the world we wend.
Pray for us, Catharine, unto the end,
That filléd with thy gretë charity
In Goddës love we schuldë live and die.

IN MEMORIAM F. H. M.

Killed in Action, April 9th, 1917

THOUGH now we see, as through the battle smoke,
The image of your young uplifted face
Surprised by death, and broken as it broke
The hearts of those who loved your eager grace,
Your noble air and magnanimity—
A summer perfect in its flowers and leaves,
Brave promises of fruitfulness to be,
Which now no hand may bind in goodly sheaves—
No hand but God's. . . . Yet your remembered ways,
Your eyes alight with gentleness and mirth,
The lovely honour of your shortened days,
A new grave gladness on the furrowed earth
Shall sow for us, a new pride wide and deep—
And we shall see the corn—and reap, and reap.

TO THE IRISH DEAD

YOU who have died as royally as kings,
Have seen with eyes ablaze with beauty, eyes
Nor gold nor ease nor comfort could make wise,
The glory of imperishable things.

Despite your shame and loneliness and loss—
Your broken hopes, the hopes that shall not cease,
Endure in dreams as terrible as peace;
Your naked folly nailed upon the cross

Has given us more than bread unto our dearth
And more than water to our aching drouth;
Though death has been as wormwood in your mouth
Your blood shall fructify the barren earth.

August 11th, 1917.

JOHN REDMOND

SHALL it be told in tragic song and story
Of two who went embittered all their days,
Two lovely Queens divided in their ways
Until their hearts grew hard, their tresses hoary?
Or shall the flying wings of oratory
Of him who bore a great hope on his face
Bring from the grave reunion to the grace
That men call Ireland and to England's glory?

Courageous soul, not yet the work is ended:
The perfect pact you never lived to see,
The peace between the warring sisters mended
Must of your patient labours come to be,
When in a noise of trumpets loud and splendid
The Gael hears blown the name of liberty.

March 8th, 1918.

BEAUTY

I

(*RELATIVE*)

HOW many are the forms that beauty shows;
To what dim shrines of sweet, forgotten art
She calls; on what wide seas her strong wind blows
The proud and perilous passion of the heart!

How many are the forms of her decay;
The blood that stains the dying of the sun,
The love and loveliness that pass away
Like roses' petals scattered one by one.

But there shall issue through the ivory gate,
Amid a mist of dreams, one dream-come-true,
Beauty immortal, mighty of estate,
The beauty that a poet loved in you;
The goodness God has set as aureole
Upon the naked meekness of your soul.

July 22nd, 1917.

BEAUTY

II

(*ABSOLUTE*)

WHO shall take Beauty in her citadel?
Her gates will splinter not to battering days;
Her slender spires can bear the onslaught well.
Shall any track her through her secret ways
To snare the pinions of the golden bird?
A feather falling through the jewelled air,
Only the echo of a lovely word—
Nowhere her being is, and everywhere.

But one may come at last through many woes
And pain and hunger to his resting place,
The watered garden of the Mystic Rose,
The contemplation of the Bruisèd Face—
The quest of all his wild, adventurous pride;
And, seeing Beauty, shall be satisfied.

July 29th, 1917.

FAITH'S DIFFICULTY

NOT these appal
The soul tip-toeing to belief:
The ribald call,
The last black anguish of the thief;

The fellowship
Of publican and Pharisee,
The harlot's lip
Passionate with humility;

Or the feet kissed
By her who was the Magdalen—
The sensualist
Is one among a world of men!

Oh, I can look
Upon another's drama; read
As in a book
Things unrelated to my need;

Give faith's assent
To that abysmal love outpoured—
But why was rent
Thy seamless coat for *me,* dear Lord?

FAITH'S DIFFICULTY

Why didst Thou bow
Thy bleeding brows for *my* heart's good?
How shall I now
Reach to the mystic hardihood

Where I can take
For personal treasure all Thy loss,
When for my sake,
My sake, Thou didst endure the cross?

For my soul's worth
Was "It is finished!" loudly cried?
For me the birth,
The sorrows of the Crucified?

February 16th, 1918.

CHRISTMAS ON CRUSADE

HERE shall we bivouac beneath the stars;
Gather the remnant of our chivalry
About the crackling fires, and nurse our scars,
And speak no more as fools must, bitterly.

The roads familiar to His feet we trod;
We saw the lonely hills whereon He wept,
Prayed, agonised—dear God of very God!—
And watched the whole world while the whole world slept.

We speak no more in anger; Christian men
Our armies rolled upon you, wave and wave:
But crooked words and swords, O Saracen,
Can only hold what they have given—a grave!

We know Him, know that gibbet whence was torn
The pardon that a felon spoke on sin:
There is more life in His dead crown of thorn
Than in your sweeping horsemen, Saladin!

We speak no more in anger, we will ride
Homeless to our own homes. His bruised head

Had never resting place. Each Christmas-tide
Blossoms the thorn and we are comforted.

Yea, of the sacred cradle of our creed
We are despoiled; the kindly tavern door
Is shut against us in our utmost need—
We know the awful patience of the poor.

We speak no more in anger, for we share
His homelessness. We will forget your scorn.
The bells are ringing in the Christmas air;
God homeless in our homeless homes is born.

THE ASCETIC

A WILD wind blows from out the angry sky
And all the clouds are tossed like thistle-down
Above the groaning branches of the trees;
For on this steel-cold night the earth is stirred
To shake away its rottenness; the leaves
Are shed like secret unremembered sins
In the great scourge of the great love of God. . . .

Ere I was learned in the ways of love
I looked for it in green and pleasant lands,
In apple orchards and the poppy fields,
And peered among the silences of woods,
And meditated the shy notes of birds
But found it not.

Oh, many a goodly joy
Of grace and gentle beauty came to me
On many a clear and cleansing night of stars.
But when I sat among my happy friends
(Singing their songs and drinking of their ale,
Warming my limbs before their kindly hearth)
My loneliness would seize me like a pain,
A hunger strong and alien as death.

No comfort stays with such a man as I,
No resting place amid the dew and dusk,
Whose head is filled with perilous enterprise
The endless quest of my wild fruitless love.

But these can tell how they have heard His voice,
Have seen His face in pure untroubled sleep,
Or when the twilight gathered on the hills
Or when the moon shone out beyond the sea!

Have *I* not seen them? Yet I pilgrimage
In desolation seeking after peace,
Learning how hard a thing it is to love.
There is a love that men find easily,
Familiar as the latch upon the door,
Dear as the curling smoke above the thatch—
But I have loved unto the uttermost
And know love in the desperate abyss,
In dereliction and in blasphemy!
And fly from God to find him, fill my eyes
With road-dust and with tears and starry hopes,
Ere I may search out Love unsearchable,
Eternal Truth and Goodness infinite,
And the ineffable Beauty that is God.

Empty of scorn and ceasing not to praise
The meanest stick and stone upon the earth,
I strive unto the stark Reality,
The Absolute grasped roundly in my hands.
Bitter and pitiless it is to love,
To feel the darkness gather round the soul,
Love's abnegation for the sake of love,
To see my Templed symbols' slow decay
Become of every ravenous weed the food,
Where bats beat hideous wings about the arch
And ruined roof, where ghosts of tragic kings
And sleek ecclesiastics come and go
Upon the shattered pavements of my creed.

Yet Mercy at the last shall lead me in,
The Bride immaculate and mystical
Tenderly guide my wayward feet to peace,
And show me love the likeness of a Man,
The Slave obedient unto death, the Lamb
Slain from the first foundations of the world,
The Word made flesh, the tender new-born Child
That is the end of all my heart's desire.

Then shall my spirit, naked of its hopes,
Stripped of its love unto the very bone,
Sink simply into Love's embrace and be
Made consummate of all its burning bliss.

August 26th, 1917.

SONNET FOR THE FIFTH OF OCTOBER

IF I had ridden horses in the lists,
Fought wars, gone pilgrimage to fabled lands,
Seen Pharaoh's drinking cups of amethysts,
Held dead Queens' secret jewels in my hands—
I would have laid my triumphs at your feet,
And worn with no ignoble pride my scars. . . .
But I can only offer you, my sweet,
The songs I made on many a night of stars.

Yet have I worshipped honour, loving you;
Your graciousness and gentle courtesy,
With ringing and romantic trumpets blew
A mighty music through the heart of me,—
A joy as cleansing as the wind that fills
The open spaces on the sunny hills.

WARFARE

WHEN I consider all thy dignity,
Thy honour which my baseness doth accuse
To my own soul, thy pride which doth refuse
Less than the suffering thou hast given me,
My hope is chilled to fear. How stealthily
Must I dispose my forces! With what ruse
And ambush snatch the bearer of good news,
Ere I can escalade austerity!

Easier it were to fling the baleful lord
And the infernal legions of the Pit,
To ride undaunted at that roaring horde:
But who shall armour me with delicate wit
Sufficient for thine overthrow? What sword
Win to the tower where thy perfections sit?

March 10th, 1918.

TREASON

THOU hast renounced thy proud and royal
state;
Deserted thy strong men-at-arms who stand
Attentive to imperious command;
And with a small key at the groaning gate—
Sweet traitress!—met thine enemy. The great
Moon threw a white enchantment o'er the
land
When in my hand I caught thy yielded hand,
And laughing kissed thy laughing lips elate.

For of thy queenly folly thou hast laid
In sandalwood thy stiff, embroidered gown;
With happiness apparelled thou hast strayed
Incognita through many a sunlit town,
Heedless of our uncaptained hosts arrayed
Or of the flags their battles shall bring down.

March 17th, 1918.

THERE WAS AN HOUR

THERE was an hour when stars flung out
A magical wild melody,
When all the woods became alive
With elfin dance and revelry.

A holiday for happy hearts!—
The trees shone silver in the moon,
And clapped their gleaming hands to see
Night like a radiant kindled noon!

For suddenly a new world woke
At one new touch of wizardry,
When my love from her mirthful mouth
Spoke words of sweet true love to me.

February 9th, 1918.

NOCTURNE

WHEN evening hangs her lamp above the hill
And calls her children to her waiting hearth,
Where pain is shed away and love and wrath,
And every tired head lies white and still—

Dear heart, will you not light a lamp for me,
And gather up the meaning of the lands,
Silent and luminous within your hands,
Where peace abides and mirth and mystery?

That I may sit with you beside the fire,
And ponder on the thing no man may guess,
Your soul's great majesty and gentleness,
Until the last sad tongue of flame expire.

December 21st, 1916.

PRIDE

WHO having known through night a great star falling
With half the host of heaven in its wake,
And o'er chaotic seas a dread voice calling,
And a new purple dawn of presage break,

Can hope to conquer thee, proud Son of Morning,
Arrayed in mighty lusts of heart and eyes,
With blood-red rubies set for thine adorning
And sorceries wherein men's souls grow wise?

Who shall withstand the onslaught of thy chariot,
Who ride to battle with thy gorgeous kings?
Dost thou not count the silver to Iscariot,
And Tyrian scarlet and the marvellous rings?

But ivory limbs and the flung festal roses,
The maddening music and the Chian wine,
Are overpast when one glad heart discloses
A pride more strange and terrible than thine!

That looked unsatisfied upon thy splendour,
And turned, all shaken with his love, away

To one dear face that holds him true and tender
Until the trumpets of the Judgment Day.

A pride that binds him till the last fierce ember
Shall fade from pride's tall roaring pyre in hell;
The gentleness and grace he shall remember,
The flower she gave, the love that she did tell.

BALLADE OF SHEEP BELLS

I LEFT behind the green and gracious weald,
And climbing stiffly up the steep incline
Found high above each little cloistered field,
Above the sombre autumn woods of pine—
Where gentle skies are clear and crystalline—
The place remote from dense and foolish towns;
And there, where all the winds are sharp with brine,
I heard the sheep bells ringing on the Downs.

The sun hung out of heaven like a shield
Emblazoned o'er with heraldry divine.
I suddenly saw, as though with eyes unsealed,
A portent sent me for an awful sign,
A fairy sea whereon the cold stars shine;
And standing on the sward of withered browns,
Burnt by the noontide and cropped close and fine,
I heard the sheep bells ringing on the Downs.

A carillon of delicate music pealed
And tingled through the steeple of my spine;
My soul was filled with loveliness and healed.
I know how joy and anguish intertwine—

But this shall greatly comfort me as wine,
Good wine, comforts a man and sweetly drowns
The many sorrows of this heart of mine—
I heard the sheep bells ringing on the Downs.

L'Envoi

Prince, old bell-wether of an ancient line,
When you're dead mutton I will weave you crowns
Of living laurel—if on you I dine—
I heard the sheep bells ringing on the Downs!

BALLADE OF A FEROCIOUS CATHOLIC

THERE is a term to every loud dispute,
A final reckoning I'm glad to say:
Some people end discussion with their boot;
Others, the prigs, will simply walk away.
But I, within a world of rank decay,
Can face its treasons with a flaming hope,
Undaunted by faith's foemen in array—
I drain a mighty tankard to the Pope!

They do not ponder on the Absolute,
But wander in a fog of words astray.
They have no rigid creed one can confute,
No hearty dogmas riotous and gay,
But feebly mutter through thin lips and grey
Things foully fashioned out of sin and soap;—
But I, until my body rests in clay,
I drain a mighty tankard to the Pope!

I've often thought that I would like to shoot
The modernists on some convenient day;
Pull out eugenists by their noxious root;
The welfare-worker chattering like a jay
I'd publicly and pitilessly slay

With blunderbuss or guillotine or rope,
Burn at the stake, or boil in oil, or flay—
I drain a mighty tankard to the Pope.

L'Envoi

Prince, proud prince Lucifer, your evil sway
Is over many who in darkness grope:
But as for me, I go another way—
I drain a mighty tankard to the Pope!

March 2nd, 1918.

DAWN

I HAVE beheld above the wooded hill
Thy tender loveliness, O Morning, break;
Beheld the solemn gladness thou dost spill
On eyes not yet awake.

But why recall unto the painful day
Wild passions sleeping like oblivious kings?
The broad day comes and thou dost speed away
Westward on swift wide wings!

December 23rd, 1917.

SUNSET

I HAVE seen death in many a varied guise,
Cruel and tender, rude and beautiful,
Looking through windows in a young child's eyes,
Stealing as soft as shadows in a pool,
Falling a sudden arrow of dismay,
Blown on a bugle with an iron note:
The slow and gentle progress of decay,
The taking of a strong man by the throat.

I have seen flowers wither and the leaf
Of lusty Summer burn to hectic red.
But ah! that splendid death untouched by grief:
The sun with glad and golden-visaged head
Superbly standing on his deadly pyre,
And sinking in a sea of jewelled fire!

February 10th, 1918.

PEACE

WHOSE lives are bound
By sleep and custom and tranquillity
Have never found
That peace which is a riven mystery

Who only share
The calm that doth this stream, these orchards bless,
Breathe but the air
Of unimpassioned pagan quietness. . . .

Initiate,
Pain burns about your head, an aureole,
Who hold in state
The utter joy which wounds and heals the soul.

You kiss the Rod
With dumb, glad lips, and bear to worlds apart
The peace of God
Which passeth all understanding in your heart.

CARRION

THE guns are silent for an hour; the sounds
Of war forget their doom; the work is done—
Strong men, uncounted corpses heaped in mounds,
Are rotting in the sun.

Foul carrion—souls till yesterday!—are these
With piteous faces in the bloodied mire;
But where are now their generous charities?
Their laughter, their desire?

In each rent breast, each crushed and shattered skull
Lived joy and sorrow, tenderness and pain,
Hope, ardours, passions brave and beautiful
Among these thousands slain!

A little time ago they heard the call
Of mating birds in thicket and in brake;
They wondering saw night's jewelled curtain fall
And all the pale stars wake. . . .

Bodies most marvellously fashioned, stark,
Strewn broadcast out upon the trampled sod—

These temples of the Holy Ghost—O hark!—
  These images of God!

Flesh, as the Word became in Bethlehem,
  Houses to hold their Sacramental Lord:
Swiftly and terribly to harvest them
  Swept the relentless sword!

Happy if in your dying you can give
  Some symbol of the Eternal Sacrificed,
Some pardon to the hearts of those who live—
  Dying the death of Christ!

Feast of the Epiphany,
January 6th, 1917.

THE BUILDING OF THE CITY

I, JOHN, who once was called by Him in jest
Boanerges, the thunder's son,
Who lay in tenderness upon His breast—
Now that my days are done,

And a great gathering glory fills my sight,
Would tell my children e'er I go
Of Him I saw with head and hair as white
As white wool—white as snow.

The face before which heaven and earth did flee,
The burnished feet, the eyes of flame,
The seven stars bright with awful mystery,
And the Ineffable Name!

Yet I who saw the four dread horsemen ride,
The vials of the wrath of God,
Beheld a greater thing: the Lamb's pure Bride,
The golden floors she trod.

How Babylon, Babylon was overthrown,
And how Euphrates flowed with blood—
Ah, but His mercy through the wide world sown,
The tree with healing bud!

I heard, among the hosts of Paradise,
The glad new song that never tires,
A Lamb as it had been slain in sacrifice
Enthroned amid the choirs.

After the utmost woes have taken toll,
And ravens plucked the eyes of kings,
God's own strange peace shall come upon the soul
On gentle, dove-like wings.

The Dragon cast into the voidless night,
God's city cometh from above,
Built by the sword of Michael and his might,
But founded in God's love.

EDEN RE-OPENED

NO man regarded where God sat
Among the rapt seraphic brows,
And God's heart heavy grew thereat,
At man's long absence from His house.

Then from the iris-circled throne
A strange and secret word is said,
And straightway hath an angel flown,
On wings of feathered sunlight sped,
Through space to where the world shone
red.

Reddest of all the stars of night
To the hoar watchers of the spheres,
But ashy cold to man's dim sight,
And filled with sins and woes and fears
And the waste weariness of years.

(No laughter rippled in the grass,
No light upon the jewelled sea;
The sky hung sullenly as brass,
And men went groping tortuously.)

But the stern warden of the Gate
Broke his dread sword upon his knees,

And opened wide the fields where wait
  The loveless unremembered trees,
  The sealed and silent mysteries.

And the scales fell from man's eyes,
  And his heart woke again, as when
Adam found Eve in Paradise;
  And joy was made complete . . . and then
    God entered in and spoke with men.

THE HOLY SPRING

THE radiant feet of Christ now lead
The dancing sunny hours,
The ancient Earth is young again
With growing grass and warm white rain
And hedgerows full of flowers.

The lilac and laburnum show
The glory of their bud,
And scattered on each hawthorn spray
The snow-white and the crimson may—
The may as red as blood.

The bluebells in the deep dim woods
Like fallen heavens lie,
And daffodils and daffodils
Upon a thousand little hills
Are waving to the sky.

The corn imprisoned in the mould
Has burst its wintry tomb,
And on each burdened orchard tree
Which stood an austere calvary
The apple blossom bloom.

The kiss of Christ has brought to life
The marvel of the sod.
Oh, joy has rent its chrysalis
To flash its jewelled wings, and is
A dream of beauty and of bliss—
The loveliness of God.

May 1917.

VIATICUM

DEAR God, not only do Thou come at last
When death hath filled my heart with
dread affright,
But when in gathered dark I meet aghast
The mimic death that falls on me at night.

The daily dying, when alone I tread
The valley of the shadow, breast the Styx,
With shrouded soul and body stiff in bed . . .
And no companion from the welcome pyx!

How should I face disarmed and unawares
The phantoms of the Pit oblivion brings—
My will surrendered, mind unapt for snares,
Eyes blinded by the evil, shuddering wings,

Did not the sunset stand encoped in gold
For priestly offices, 'mid censers swung,
And with anointed thumb and finger hold
The symbolled Godhead to my eager tongue?

Then with my body's trance there doth descend
Peace on my eyelids, goodness that shall keep
My wandering feet, and at my side a friend
Through all the winding caverns of my sleep.

August 12th, 1917.

PUNISHMENT

WHAT vengeful rod
Is laid upon my bleeding shoulders?
What scourge, O God,
Makes known my shame to all beholders?

Through what vast skies
Crashes Thy wrath like shuddering thunders?

. . . . .

Before my eyes
Thou dost display the wonder of wonders!

As punishment
To one whom sin should bind in prison,
Hath Mercy sent
Word of the crucified arisen!

Guilt's penalty
Exacted—past my reeling reason!—
Which lays on me
Love—as a whip fit for my Treason!

March 3rd, 1918.

AFTER COMMUNION

NOW art Thou in my house of feeble flesh,
O Word made flesh! My burning soul by Thine
Caught mystically in a living mesh!
Now is the royal banquet, now the wine,
The body broken by the courteous Host
Who is my humble Guest—a Guest adored—
Though once I spat upon, scourged at the post,
Hounded to Calvary and slew my Lord!

My name is Legion, but separate and alone;
Wash, wash, dear Crucified, my Pilate hand!
Rejected Stone, be Thou my corner-stone!
Like Mary at the cross's foot I stand;
Like Magdalene upon my sins I grieve;
Like Thomas do I touch Thee and believe.

December 16th, 1917.

THE UNIVERSAL MOTHER

WHO standing thrilled in his bewilderment
Can tell thy humble ways,
The hidden paths on which thy white feet went
Through all thy lonely days?

From what deep root the Lily of the Lord
To grace and beauty grew,
Or in what fires was tempered the keen sword
That pierced thy bosom through?

But we may turn and find within our hands
Our souls' strange bread and wine,
The gathered meanings of thy starry lands
Where mystic roses shine.

Heaven's air might grow for us too cold and tense,
Her towers far and faint,
Did we not know thy sorrowful innocence,
Or soldier, singer, saint,

Earth's heroes with earth's poor not kneel and tell
Their full hearts' burdenings
To those dear eyes before which Gabriel
Bent low with folded wings.

The soldier shall remember whose the heel
That crushed the serpent's head,
How mighty in thy hand hath been the steel
That dyed thy bosom red.

The singer weave for thee a cloak of light
Where earth's wild colours run,
As God hath crowned thee with the stars of night
And clothed thee with the sun.

The saint who in a cloister cool and dim
His difficult road hath kept
Shall think of thee whose body cloistered Him
When in thy womb He slept.

And thou shalt call to thee the poor of earth
To share thy joy with them,
And fill them with thy magnitude and mirth
In many a Bethlehem.

February 4th, 1917.

THE BOASTER

IF the last blissful star should fade and wither,
If one by one
Orion and the Pleiades crash and crumble;
The lordly sun

Be turned away, a beggar, all his triumphs
Gone down in doom,
Wandering unregarded through the cosmos,
None giving him room.

Then would I shout defiant to the whirlwinds;
Boastingly cry,
"Go wreck the world, its towering hills and waters!
But I, even I,

"Whose body was flung out upon the dungheap
With weeds to rot,
Still keep my soul unshaken by the ruin
That harms me not!

"True, I have fled from many a shameful battle,
Did cringe and cower
Before my foes, but who can ever rob me
Of one great hour?"

For joy rang through me like a silver trumpet;
About my head
The tiny flowers flapped in the breeze like banners
Of royal red.

And suddenly the seven deeps of heaven
Were cloven apart,
When love stood in your eyes and shone and trembled
Within your heart.

February 3rd, 1918.

UNWED

IF I go down to death uncomforted
By love's great conquest and its great surrender,
Bearing my soul along, unwed, unwed;
(Your darling hands' caresses swift and tender
Lacking upon my head, upon my lips
Your lips); and in my heart love unfulfilled,
And in my eyes a blind apocalypse,
Bereft of all the glory I have willed;

I shall go proudly for your dear love's sake,
Triumphant for brief memories, but tragic
Because of those large hopes that fail and break
Beneath Fate's wizard-wand of cruel magic—
But ah, Fate could not touch me if I stood
Completed by your love's beatitude!

December 15th, 1917.

WED

I KNOW the winds are rhythmical
In unison with your footfall.
I know that in your heart you keep
The secret of the woodland's sleep.

You met the blossom-bearing May—
Sweet sister!—on the road half way,
And she has laid upon your hair
The coloured coronal you wear.

But ah! the white wings of the Dove
Flutter about the head I love,
And on your bosom doth repose
The beauty of the Mystic Rose,

That I must add to poetry
A dark and fearful ecstasy;
For in the house of joy you bless
Unworthiness with holiness.

ENGLAND

I

LIKE some good ship that founders in the sea,
Like granite towers that crumble into dust,
So pass the emblems of thine empery.
But O immortal Mother and august,
Ardours of English saint and bard and king
Blend simply with thy soul, even as their bones
Mingle with English soil. Their spirits sing
A great song lordly as is a loud wind's tones.
Decayed by gold and ease and loathly pride,
We had forgot our greatness and become
Huckstering empire-builders, and denied
The excellent name of freedom . . . till the drum
Woke glory such as met the eyes of Drake,
Or Alfred when he saw the heathen break!

II

Where shall we find thee? In the avarice
That robs our brave adventures? In the shame
Spoiling our splendours? In the sacrifice
Of tears we wrung from Ireland? Nay, thy name

Is written secretly in kindliness
  Upon the patient faces of the poor,
In that good anger wherewith thou didst bless
  Our hearts, when beat upon the shaking door
Strong hands of hell. . . . Whether before the flood
  We sink, or out of agonies reborn
Learn once again the meaning of our blood,
  Laughter and liberty—a sacred scorn
Is ours irrevocably since we stood
  And heard the barbarians' guns across the morn.

December 24th and 26th, 1917.

LYRIC LOVE

WHEN kindly years have given me grace
To read your spirit through;
To see the starlight on your face,
Upon your hair the dew;

To touch the fingers of your hands,
The shining wealth they hold;
To find in dim and dreamy lands
That tender dusks enfold

The ancient sorrows that were sealed,
The hidden wells of joy,
The secrets that were unrevealed
To one who was a boy.

Then to my patient ponderings
Will fruits of solace fall,
When I have learned through many Springs,
Mighty and mystical,

To hear through sounds of brooks and birds
Love in the leafy grove,
As in my lyric heart your words
Bestir a lyric love.

Then I shall brood, grown good and wise,
The truth of fairy tales,
And greet romance with gay surprise
In woods of nightingales.

And find, with hoary head and sage,
In songs which I have sung
The meanings of the end of age—
The rapture of the young!

February 11th, 1918.

DRUMS OF DEFEAT

THE FOOL

A SHOUT of laughter and of scorn,
A million jeering lips and eyes—
And in the sight of all men born
The wildest of earth's madmen dies!

Whose trust was put in empty words
To-day is numbered with the dead;
To-morrow crows and evil birds
Shall pluck those strange eyes from his head!

The fellows of this country clown
Are scattered (fool beyond belief!),
All blown away like thistledown,
Except a harlot and a thief.

And shall he shatter fates with *these?*
(He that would neither strive nor cry)
Or thunder through the Seven Seas?
Or shake the stars down from the sky?

Have mercy and humility
Become unconquerable swords,
That Caiaphas must tremblingly
Kneel with the world's imperial lords

Before this crazy carpenter—
  This body writhing on a rod—
And worship in that bloody hair
  The dreadful foolishness of God?

A shout of laughter and of scorn,
  A million jeering lips and eyes—
And in the sight of all men born
  The wildest of earth's madmen dies!

DON QUIXOTE

THE air is valiant with drums
And honourable the skies,
When he rides singing as he comes
With solemn, dreamy eyes—
Of swinging of the splendid swords,
And crashing of the nether lords,
When Hell makes onslaught with its hordes
In desperate emprise.

He rides along the roads of Spain
The champion of the world,
For whom great soldans live again
With Moorish beards curled—
But all their spears shall not avail
With one who weareth magic mail,
This hero of an epic tale
And his brave gauntlet hurled!

Clangour of horses and of arms
Across the quiet fields,
Herald and trumpeter, alarms
Of bowmen and of shields;

When doubt that twists and is afraid
Is shattered in the last crusade,
Where flaunts the plume and falls the blade
The cavalier wields.

Although in that eternal cause
No liegemen gather now,
Or flowered dames to grant applause,
Yet on his naked brow
The victor's laurels interwreath;
But he no dower can bequeath
But sword snapped short and empty sheath
And errantry and vow!

Against his foolish innocence
No man alive can stand,
Nor any giant drive him hence
With sling or club or brand—
For where his angry bugle blows
There fall unconquerable foes;
Of mighty men of war none knows
To stay his witless hand.

All legendary wars grow tame
And every tale gives place

Before the knight's unsullied name
And his romantic face:
Yea, he shall break the stoutest bars
And bear his courage and his scars
Beyond the whirling moons and stars
And all the suns of space!

IRELAND

BESIDE your bitter waters rise
The Mystic Rose, the Holy Tree,
Immortal courage in your eyes,
And pain and liberty.

The stricken arms, the cloven shields,
The trampled plumes, the shattered drum,
The swords of your lost battlefields
To hopeless battles come.

And though your scattered remnants know
Their shameful rout, their fallen kings,
Yet shall the strong, victorious foe
Not understand these things:

The broken ranks that never break,
The merry road your rabble trod,
The awful laughter they shall take
Before the throne of God.

IN MEMORIAM

Patrick Henry Pearse

Executed May 3rd, 1916

R.I.P.

IN this grey morning wrapped in mist and rain
You stood erect beneath the sullen sky,
A heart which held its peace and noble pain,
A brave and gentle eye!

The last of all your silver songs are sung;
Your fledgling dreams on broken wings are dashed—
For suddenly a tragic sword was swung
And ten true rifles crashed.

By one who walks aloof in English ways
Be this high word of praise and sorrow said:
He lived with honour all his lovely days,
And is immortal, dead!

MATER DESOLATA

To Margaret Pearse

TO you the dreary night's long agony,
The anguish, and the laden heart that broke
Its vase of burning tears, the voiceless cry,—
And then the horror of that blinding stroke!
To you all this—and yet to you much more.
God pressed into the chalice of your pain
A starry triumph, when the sons you bore
Were written on the roll of Ireland's slain.
Let no man touch your glorious heritage,
Or pluck one pang of sorrow from your heart,
Or stain with any pity the bright page
Emblazoning the holy martyrs' part.
Ride as a queen your splendid destiny,
Since death is swallowed up in victory!

THE STIRRUP CUP

DRAW rein; there's the inn where the lamps
show plain—
Where we never may drink together again.
While the stars are lost in the slate-cold sky
Let us drink good ale before we die
In the wind and bitter rain!

Your sword is made ready upon your hip?
Then once again, man, in good-fellowship!
Though hunted and outlawed and fugitive
We shall drink together again if we live—
Set the tankard to your lip!

Honour and death and—how goes the tune?
See the clouds rift and disrobe the moon!
And a blood-red streak in the sullen skies
And—*Honour and death and adventure's eyes*—
Now spurs—for they'll be here soon!

THE ENSIGN

HIGH up above the wooded ridge
Beams out a round benignant moon
Upon the village and the bridge
Through which the slumberous waters croon.

Now polished silver is the mill;
And, clad in ghostly mysteries,
The church tower glimmers on the hill
Among the sad, abiding trees;

And watched by its familiar star
Sleeps each small house, so still and white—
From all the noise and blood of war,
O God, how far removed to-night!

Unconscious of their destiny
How many drew this air for breath;
Here lived and loved . . . and now they see
The terrible, swift shape of death.

The bounty of these quiet skies,
The tender beauty of these lands,
Still sheds a peace upon their eyes,
And binds their hearts and nerves their hands.

That they who only thought to know
  This valley in the moonlight furled,
Have heard immortal trumpets blow,
  And shake the pillars of the world!

BALLADE OF ORCHARDS

THOUGH Jeshurun kicks and grows fatter and fatter,
And chinks in his pockets the gold of his gain,
Yet up in the gables the young sparrows chatter,
The corn-fields are rich with the promise of grain,
The hedges are yellow, and (balm to the brain!)
Their pink and white blossoms the cherry trees scatter—
The blossoming orchards of England remain!

Long lines of our soldiers swing by with a clatter,
To die in their thousands by river and plain,
In lands where the gathering loud torrents batter,
They heap the hills high with heroical slain—
But far in the weald how the misty moons wane!
And deep in a silence no anger can shatter
The blossoming orchards of England remain!

The world is a fool and as mad as a hatter—
And poets and lovers were sent her for bane—

Yet theirs are the ears which can catch the first patter,
The prophet of all God's abundance of rain,
The smell of earth earthy and wholesome again;
And from the drenched ground where the spent bullets spatter
The blossoming orchards of England remain!

L'Envoi

Princes and potentates, ye whom men flatter,
Harken a moment to this my refrain—
Ye shall pass as a dream, and it will not much matter—
The blossoming orchards of England remain!

A GREAT WIND

A GREAT wind blows through the pine trees,
A clean salt wind from sea,
A loud wind full of all healing
Blows kindly but boisterously;
Oh, a good wind blows through the pine trees
And the heart and mind of me!

A wind stirs the long grass lightly
And the dear young flowers of May,
And blows in the English meadows
The breath of a Summer's day—
But this wind rings with honour
And is wet with the cold sea spray.

There are straits where the tall ships founder
And no live thing may draw breath,
Where men look at splendid, angry skies
And hear what the thunder saith:
Where men look their last at glory
And bravely drink of death.

There is much afoot this evening
In these pine woods by the sea,

And no branch shall endure until morning
That is rotten on the tree—
Nor any decayed thing endure in my soul
When God's wind blows through me!

BIRTHDAY SONNET

HOW shall I find the words of perfect praise,
To give you back the gladness and the mirth,
With which you filled my hands, the lyric days
Your gracious bounty gave me in my dearth?
My song fails on the wing, and yet I know
The meaning of Spring's living ecstasy,
The laughing prophecy the March winds blow
Among the buds, and through the heart of me.

I know, I know the rose and silver dress,
Wherewith God clothed that clear and virginal morn,
Which came to you in joyful gentleness,
The hour of shy delight when you were born.
I know the innocence and sweet surprise,
The waiting earth made ready for your eyes.

March 27th, 1917

SILENCE

THOUGH I should deck you with my jewelled rhyme,
And spread my songs a carpet at your feet,
Where men may see unchanged through changing time
Your face a pattern in sad songs and sweet;
Though I should blow your honour through the earth
Or touch your gentleness on gentle strings,
Or sing abroad your beauty and your worth—
Dearest, yet these were all imperfect things.

Rather in lovely silence will I keep
The heart's shut song no words of mine may mar,
No words of mine enrich. The ways of sleep
And prayer and pain, all things that lonely are,
All humble things that worship and rejoice
Shall weave a spell of silence for my voice.

AT YELVERTON

WHEN into Yelverton I came
I found the bracken all aflame,
The tors in their unyielding line,
The air as comforting as wine,
The swinging wind, the singing sun
At Yelverton.

At Yelverton the moor is kind
And blows its healing through my mind,
The hunchback skyline lies a mist
Of purple and of amethyst,
And up and down the smooth roads run
At Yelverton.

At Yelverton a man may stand,
The whole of Devon within his hand,
The tors in their austerity,
And far away the basking sea,
A cloth of shining silver spun
At Yelverton.

At Yelverton a man may keep
Deep silence and a deeper sleep,

Yet know the brave recurring dream
Of kingly cider, queenly cream
To bless him when his days are done
At Yelverton.

THE JOY OF THE WORLD

FOR your joy do the long grasses rustle, the tree-tops stir
Where the wind moves eagerly through the pine and the fir;
Alert for your coming the woods and the meadows all wait;
The buttercups grow and the turtle calls to his mate.

And God for your clothing fashioned in patience the sun,
A cloak wrought of glory and fire where dreadful dyes run,
Saffron and crimson and sapphire and gold, as is meet;
And stars to be set on your head and stars under your feet.

For you, His most lovely of daughters, the mighty God bowed
From heaven to give you your dowry of sunset and cloud;

And splendid in light and in worship were Gabriel's wings,
When he breathed in your bosom the hope of impossible things.

Sudden and dear was the secret he whispered to you,
Of one who should quietly fall to the earth with the dew;
As dew that at night in the valleys distils upon fleece,
With no shattering trump did He come but in terrible peace.

In your hands that are sweeter than honey, in all the wide earth
God laid the desire of the nations, their home and their mirth,
And gave to your merciful keeping man's joy and man's rest,
And under incredible skies a babe at your breast.

And though the stars wane and the royal deep
colours should fade,
Yet still shall endure in the heart and the lips of a
Maid,
The sweep of the archangel's pinions—the humble
accord—
The song—the dim stable—the night—and the
birth of the Lord!

For your joy do the long grasses rustle, the tree-
tops stir
Where the wind moves eagerly through the pine
and the fir;
Alert for your coming the woods and the meadows
all wait;
The buttercups grow and the turtle calls to his
mate.

GRATITUDE

HOW shall I answer God and stand,
My naked life within my hand,
To plead upon the Judgment Day?
Seeing the glory in array
Of cherubim and seraphim,
What answer shall I give to Him?

I was too dull of heart and sense
To read His cryptic providence,
Its strange and intricate device
Was hidden from my foolish eyes.
My gratitude could not reach up
To the sharing of His awful cup,
To the blinding light of mystery
And the painful pomp of sanctity.

But since as a happy child I went
With love and laughter and content
Along the road of simple things,
Making no idle questionings;
Since young and careless I did keep
The cool and cloistered halls of sleep,

And took my daily drink and food,
Finding them very, very good—
God may perhaps be pleased to see
Such signs of sheer felicity.

But if I somehow should be given
An attic in His storied heaven,
I'm sure I should be far apart
From Catherine of the wounded heart,
Teresa of the flaming soul,
And Bruno's sevenfold aureole,
And be told, of course, I'm not to mix
With the Bernards or the Dominics,
Or thrust my company upon
St. Michael or the great St. John.

Yet God may grant it me to sit
And sing (with little skill or wit)
My intimate canticles of praise
For all life's dear and gracious days—
Though hardly a single syllable
Of what St. Raphael has to tell,
The triumphs of the cosmic wars,
The raptures and the jewelled scars

Of the high lords of martyrdom—
Hardly a word of this will come
To strike my understanding ear,
Hardly a single word, I fear!

. . . . .

But woe upon the Judgment Day
If my heart gladdened not at May;
Nor woke to hear with the waking birds
The morning's sweet and winsome words;
Nor loved to see laburnums fling
Their pennons to the winds of Spring;
Nor watched among the expectant grass
The Summer's painted pageant pass;
Nor thrilled with blithe beatitude
Within a kindling Autumn wood
Or when each separate twig did lie
Etched sharp upon the wintry sky.
If out of all my sunny hours
I brought no chaplet of their flowers;
If I gave no kiss to His lovely feet
When they shone as poppies in the wheat;
If no rose to me were a Mystic Rose,
No Snow were whiter than the snows;

GRATITUDE

If in my baseness I let fall
At once His cross and His carnival . . .
Then must I take my ungrateful head
To where the lakes of Hell burn red.

IN DOMO JOHANNIS

HERE rest the thin worn hands which fondled Him,
The trembling lips which magnified the Lord,
Who looked upon His handmaid, the young, slim
Mary at her meek tasks, and here the sword
Within the soul of her whose anguished eyes
Gazed at the stars which watch Gethsemane,
And saw the sun fail in the stricken skies.
In these dim rooms she guards the treasury
Of her white memories—the strange, sweet face
More marred than any man's, the tender, fain
And eager words, the wistful human grace,
The mysteries of glory, joy and pain,
And that hope tremulous, half-sob, half-song,
Ringing through night—"How long, O Lord, how long?"

AT WOODCHESTER

HARK how a silver music falls
Between these meek monastic walls,
And airy flute and psaltery
Awaken heavenly melody!

Yet not to unentunèd ears
May come the joyance of the spheres,
And only humbled hearts may see
The humble heart of mystery.

Where tread in light and lilting ways
Bright angels through the dance's maze
On grassy floors to meet the just
In robes of woven diamond dust.

And jewelled daisies burst to greet
The flutter of the Blessed's feet:
Along the cloister's gathered gloom
Lilies and mystic roses bloom.

Grown in the hush of hidden hours
Thoughts fairer than the summer flowers
Lift up their sweet and living heads,
Crystalline whites and sanguine reds!

Who keep in lowly pageantry
Silence a lovely ceremony;*
Who set a seal upon their eyes
Responsive only to the skies;

Who in a quick obedience move
Along the hallowed paths of love,
Win at last to that secret place
Adorned with the glory of God's face.

And as each eve the tired sun
Sinks softly down, the long day done,
Upon the bosom of the west—
So, even so, upon God's breast

Each weary heart is folded deep
Into His arms in quiet sleep,
And sheltered safe, all warm and bright,
Against the phantoms of the night.

* *"Quia silentium est pulchra caeremonia"*:
Ex Constitutionibus Fratrum
S. Ordinis Prædicatorum.

"FOR THEY SHALL POSSESS THE EARTH"

YOU who were beauty's worshipper,
Her ardent lover, in this place
You have seen Beauty face to face;
And known the wistful eyes of her,
And kissed the hands of Poverty,
And praised her tattered bravery.

You shall be humble, give your days
To silence and simplicity;
And solitude shall come to be
The goal of all your winding ways;
When pride and youthful pomp of words
Fly far away like startled birds.

Possessing nothing, you shall know
The heart of all things in the earth,
Their secret agonies and mirth,
The awful innocence of snow,
The sadness of November leaves,
The joy of fields of girded sheaves.

A shelter from the driving rain
Your high renouncement of desire;
Food it shall be and wine and fire;

"FOR THEY SHALL POSSESS THE EARTH"

And Peace shall enter once again
As quietly as dreams in sleep
The hidden trysting-place you keep.

You shall grow humble as the grass,
  And patient as each slow, dumb beast;
  And as their fellow—yea the least—
Yield stoat and hedgehog room to pass;
And learn the ignorance of men
Before the robin and the wren.

The things so terrible and sweet
  You strove to say in accents harsh,
  The frogs are croaking on the marsh,
The crickets chirping at your feet—
Oh, they can teach you unafraid
The meaning of the songs you made.

Till clothed in white humilities,
  Each happening that doth befall,
  Each thought of yours be musical,
As wind is musical in the trees,
When strong as sun and clean as dew
Your old dead songs come back to you.

BALLADE OF THE BEST SONG IN THE WORLD

I KNOW a sheaf of splendid songs by heart
Which stir the blood or move the soul to tears,
Of death or honour or of love's sweet smart,
The runes and legends of a thousand years;
And some of them go plaintively and slow,
And some are jolly like the earth in May—
But this is *really* the best song I know:
I-tiddly-iddly-i-ti-iddly-ay.

I sang it in a house-boat on the Dart
To several members of the House of Peers.
The Editor of the *Exchange and Mart*
(A man of taste) stood up and led the cheers.
I carolled it at Christmas in the snow,
I hummed it on my summer holiday—
Doh-ray-me-fah-sol-la-fah-me-ray-doh—
I-tiddly-iddly-i-ti-iddly-ay.

It made a gathering of Fabians start
And put their fingers in their outraged ears.
They did not understand my subtle art,
But though they only gave me scoffs and jeers,

BALLADE OF BEST SONG IN THE WORLD

I sang my ditty high, I sang it low,
I sang it every known (and unknown) way—
Crescendo, forte, pianissimo—
I-tiddly-iddly-i-ti-iddly-ay.

L'Envoi

Prince, if by some amazing fluke you go
To heaven, you'll hear the shawms and citherns play,
And all the trumpets of the angels blow
I-tiddly-iddly-i-ti-iddly-ay.

TAIL-PIECE

A BOY goes by the window while I write,
Whistling—the little demon!—in delight.
I shake my fist and scowl at him, and curse
Over the carcase of my murdered verse.
And yet—which is it that the world most needs,
His happy laughter or my threadbare screeds?
There is more poetry in being young
Than in the finest song that Shakespeare sung—
And if that's true of godlike Shakespeare—well,
Whistle the Marseillaise, and ring the bell,
And chase the cat, and lose your tennis-ball,
And tear your trousers on the garden wall,
Scalp a Red Indian, sail the Spanish seas—
Do any mortal thing you damn well please.

AVE

WHEN all the world was black
Your courage did not fail;
No laughter did you lack
Or fellowship or ale.

And you have made defeat
A nobler pageantry,
Your bitterness more sweet
Than is their victory.

For by your stricken lips
A gallant song is sung;
Joy suffers no eclipse,
Is lyrical and young,

Is rooted in the sod,
Is ambient in the air,
Since Hope lifts up to God
The escalade of prayer.

The tyrants and the kings
In purple splendour ride,
But all ironic things
Go marching at your side

To nerve your hands with power,
To salt your souls with scorn,
Till that awaited hour
When Freedom shall be born.

A REPLY

To one who said that to conceive of God as a person was to reduce Him to our own level.

OH, we can pierce
With the swift lightnings far and fierce;
We can behold
Him in the sunset's lucid gold.

Yet not by these
Do we read His dark mysteries,
Or tear apart
The thick veil upon Heaven's heart. . . .

Kneel with the kings
Before His dreadful Emptyings,
And see Him laid
In the slender arms of a Maid.

The village street
Knew God's familiar, weary feet—
The carpenter's Son
Who made the great hills one by one.

No glory slips
From His sublime apocalypse—

His homespun dress,
Hunger, thirst and the wilderness.

To a slave's death
He gave his broken body's breath;
An outcast hung
The swart and venomous thieves among.

And still yields He
Godhead to our humanity,
Leaving for sign
Himself in the meek bread and wine.

JOB

CAN flesh and blood contrive defence
'Gainst swords that pierce the spirit through,
Or meet, not knowing why or whence,
The blind bolt crashing from the blue?

"Oh, men have held times out of mind
Their stern and stoic courage bright—
But if no cry comes on the wind,
How shall I face the ambushed night?

"How shall I turn to bay, and stand
To grapple, if I cannot see
My fierce assailant at my hand,
The high look of mine enemy?

"If He will answer me, with rod
And plague and thunder let Him come—
But how can man dispute with God
Who writes no book, whose voice is dumb?

"Who rings me round with prison bars
Through which I peer with sleepless eyes,

And see the enigmatic stars—
These only—in the iron skies."

. . . . .

"These only? These together sang
At the glad birthday of the earth
When all the courts of Heaven rang
With shouting and angelic mirth!

"The night enfolds you with a cloak
Of silence and of chill affright?
But when man's wells of laughter broke,
Who gave man singing in the night?

"The Rod shall burst to flowers and fruit
Richer than grew on Aaron's rod,
And Mercy clothe you head to foot,
Beloved and smitten of your God!"

THE SOIL OF SOLACE

I MAY not stand with other men, or ride
In those grey fields where fall the screaming shells,
Or mix my blood with blood of those who died
To find a heaven in their sevenfold hells.
Honour and death a strident bugle blows,
Setting an end to death and blasphemy—
Oh, had I any choice in it, God knows
Where in this epic day I too would be!
Yet may I keep some English heart alive
With a poet's pleasure in all English things—
Good-fellowship and kindliness still thrive
In English soil; the dusk is full of wings;
And by the river long reeds grow; and still
A little house sits brooding on the hill!

TO THE DEAD

NOW lays the king his crown and sceptre down,
Her gown of taffeta the lovely bride,
The knight his sword, his cap and bells the clown,
The poet all his verse's pomp and pride—
The eloquent, the beautiful, the brave
Descend reluctant to the straight, cold grave.

No more shall shine for them the glorious rose,
Or sunsets stain with red and awful gold,
Night shall no more for them her stars disclose,
Or day the grandeur of the Downs unfold,
Or those eyes dull in death watch solemnly
The regal splendour of the Sussex sea.

For them the ringing surges are in vain;
They wake not at the cry of waking bird;
The sun, the holy hill, the fruitful rain,
The winds have called them and they have not stirred;
The woods are widowed of your eager tread,
O dear and desolate and dungeoned dead!

Yet you shall rest awhile in English earth,
And ripen many a pleasant English field
Through the green Summer to the Autumn's mirth
And flower unconsciously upon the weald—
Until that last angelic word be said,
And the shut graves deliver up their dead!

SPRING, 1916

THE grey and wrinkled earth again is young
And lays aside her tattered winter weeds
For April-coloured gauze, and gives her tongue
To jocund songs instead of pedants' screeds.
Scatter the thin, white ashes of the hearth,
And throw the brilliant diamond casement wide—
Oh, wonder of the lonely garden garth!
Oh, golden glory of the steep hillside
Where flames the living loveliness of God! . . .
But far, far off, beyond the bloom and bud
A fiercer blossom burgeons from the sod
Bright with the hues of honour and of blood;
And men have plucked the sanguine flower of pain
Where violets might be growing in the rain!

THE RETURN

BEYOND these hills where sinks the sun in amber,
Imperial in purple, gold and blood,
I keep the garden walks where roses clamber,
Set in still rows with shrub and flower and bud.

After the clash of all the swords that sunder,
After the headstrong pride of youth that fails,
After the shattered heavens and the thunder
Remain the summer woods and nightingales!

So when the fever has died down that urges
My lips to utterance of whirling words,
Which, blown among the winds and stormy surges,
Skim the wild sea-waves like the wild sea-birds.

So when has ceased the tumult and the riot,
A man may rest his soul a little space,
And seek your solitary eyes in quiet,
And all the gracious calmness of your face.

FULFILMENT

(An Inscription for a Book of Poems)

YOU who will hold these gathered songs,
Made, darling, long before we met,
Must keep the prophecy which belongs
To those dear eyes, so strangely set
With peace and laughter, where fulfils
The rapture of my alien hills.

Unknown, unknown you softly trod
Among my fruitful silences,
The last and splendid gift of God.
The quest of all my Odysseys,
The meaning of those quiet lands
Where I found comfort at your hands.

And when the yellowing woods awake,
And small birds' twittered loves are told,
When streams run silver, and there break
The crocuses to tender gold,
When quick light winds shall stir my hair,
Some part of you will wander there.

PROPHECY

MY eyes look out across the dim grey wold,
The grey sky and the grey druidic trees,
Knowing they keep inviolate the gold
Memories of summer and the prophecies
That lie imprisoned in the buried seeds
Of all the lyric gaiety of Spring. . . .
The sun shall ride again his flaming steeds;
The dragon-fly dance past on diamond wing;
The earth distil to music; and the rose
Flaunt her impassioned loveliness and be
A symbol of the singing hour that blows
The tall ship and my gladness home to me—
When I shall cry: Awake, my heart, awake,
And deck yourself in beauty for her sake!

THE SINGER TO HIS LADY

IF any song I sing for you should be
But made to please a poet's vanity,
A richly jewelled and an empty cup
In which no hallowed wine is offered up,
A thing of chosen rhyme and cunning phrase,
Fashioned that it may bring its maker praise;
If love in me grow only soft and sweet,
Remembering not with what worn and weary feet
It journeyed to your fields of golden grain,
The quiet orchards folded in the rain,
The twilight gardens and the morning birds;
If love remembers not and brings you words,
Words as your thanks; if in an idle hour
It breaks its sword and plays the troubadour—
Then may high God, the Universal Lord,
Break me, as I false knight have broken my sword,
If I who have touched your hands should bring eclipse
To love's nobility with lying lips,
Having seen more terrible than gleaming spears
Your gentleness, your sorrow and your tears!

CERTAINTIES

ACROSS the fields of unforgotten days
I see the gorgeous pearl-white morning burst
Through her fine gauze of dreamy summer haze
Beyond the rolling flats of Staplehurst,
To bless the hours with songs of nesting birds,
And the wild hedge rose and the apple tree,
And laughter and the ring of friendly words,
And the noon's pageant moving languidly.
I walk again with boys now grown to men,
And see far off with reminiscent eyes,
How in the tangled woods of Horsmonden
The mighty sun, a blood-red dragon, dies. . . .
Some things there are as rooted as the grass
In a man's mind—and these shall never pass.

FEAR

TREAD softly; we are on enchanted ground:
One touch and every hidden thing lies bare,
The deep sea sundered, suddenly unbound
The awful thunders instinct in the air!

Oh, these we know; but what if we should break
A secret spell as easily as glass,
And stumble on their sleeping wrath and wake
The armies and the million blades of grass?

And find more dread than whirlwinds round our head,
The sweep of sparrows' fierce, avenging wings,
The anger of wild roses burning red,
The terrible hate of earth's most helpless things?

CHARITY

WHO think of charity as milky-eyed
Know not of God's great handmaid's terrible name,
Who comes in garments by the rainbow dyed,
And crowned and winged and charioted with flame.

For Truth and Justice ride abroad with her,
And Honour's trumpets peal before her face:
The high archangels stand and minister
When she doth sit within her holy place.

None knoweth in the depth nor in the height
What meaneth Charity, God's secret word,
But kiss her feet, and veil their burning sight
Before her naked heart, her naked sword.

SIGHT AND INSIGHT

THIS hour God's darkest mysteries
Are plainer than the screeds of men,
Tangled and false philosophies
Fashioned by lying tongue and pen.

Plain as those bastions of cloud,
Kind as the wide and kindly skies,
And in the wild winds shouting loud
The truths concealed from pedants' eyes.

Pages which he may read who runs,
Where no unlettered man may fail,
Candid as are his noonday suns
Familiar as his cheese and ale.

Him, Whom our eyes may see, our ears
Hear, Whom our groping hands may touch—
Him we shall find ere many years,
And finding fear not overmuch.

Who gave me simple things to keep,—
Laughter and love and memories,
A farm, and meadows full of sheep,
And quiet gardens full of bees,

And those five gateways of the soul,
  Through which all good may come to me,
Saints glorious of aureole,
  The flying thunders of the sea,

And feasts, and gracious hands of friends,
  And flowers good to stroke and smell;
Oh, in the secret woods He sends
  The birds their trembling joys to tell!

He, too, is every day afresh
  Hid and revealed in bread and wine,—
The awful Word of God made flesh,
  Mortal commingling with divine!

Shadows and evil dreams o'erthrown
  With Dagon and the gods of scorn,
Since Peace was in the silence blown
  On that dear night when God was born.

CHRISTMAS CAROL

LAY quietly Thy kingly head
O mighty weakness from on high;
God rest Thee in Thy manger-bed—
Sing Lullo-lullo-lullaby—
O Splendour hid from every eye!—
La-lullo-lullo-lullaby!

"Ye mild and humble cattle, yield
Room for my little son to lie;
Your God and mine is here revealed—
Sing Lullo-lullo-lullaby—
Naked beneath a naked sky—
La-lullo-lullo-lullaby!

"Deal kindly with Him, moon and sun;
No bird to Him a song deny;
Ye winds and showers every one
Sing Lullo-lullo-lullaby—
For men shall cast Him out to die . . .
La-lullo-lullo-lullaby!"

A GARDEN ENCLOSED

THERE is a plot where all the winds are still,
A hidden garden where no voice is heard,
Only a splashing fountain and the shrill
Sweet clamour of a bird.

The poplars guard like tall, grave sentinels
Its peace inviolate; and in the tower
With careful ritual ring out the bells
The end of each dead hour.

Laburnums, hollyhocks and roses run
By secret paths—but who shall burst the bars?
Oh, who shall see—except the curious sun
And all the peering stars? . . .

And Thou and Thou, my Love, for whom I keep
My heart a watered garden, all Thine own,
Where flowers my guardian angel tends in sleep,
Bright summer blooms, are grown!

Come, my Belovèd, come—behold, the skies
Are fragrant with the evening scents and dew:
My soul hath sickened for Thy lips and eyes,
And laden is with rue!

Oh, Thou shalt fly with soft wings like a dove's
And hold me fast beyond all fate and fear,
And we 'mid flowers shall tell our flowering loves
Where no one else can hear!

THE LOVER

AN hour ago I saw Thee ride in gold
Along the burning highways of the skies;
And now—Thou comest with soft and suppliant eyes,
And fearing lest Thy love seem overbold.

In this dear garden set with flower and tree,
My soul, a maiden whom a great king woos,
Stands thrilled and silent—Lord, what can she choose,
Dumbfounded by Thy strange humility?

Since Thou wilt have it so, my Lord, I bare
In love and shamefastness my soul—Thy soul—
So lay Thy tender hand, an aureole,
Upon my beating heart, my chrismed hair.

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